

IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Local governance initiatives in Iraq are implemented in conditions that were set by decades of rule by a repressive government. This environment isolated the Iraqi people from the rest of the world and set individual against individual, neighbor against neighbor, ethnic group against ethnic group, and religious group against religious group. For more than 15 years, Iraqis have been deprived of adequate infrastructure, as previously well-designed and constructed systems deteriorated and new capacity was not built to match growth.

USAID is restoring a sense of civil society in Iraq with its partner Research Triangle Institute (RTI) by improving the ability of sub-national institutions to deliver services to the people and forming or strengthening community organizations to hold local government accountable for its performance and actions. Working closely with the Coalition Provisional Authority's civilian and military personnel, USAID's Local Governance Program is working to improve living conditions for all Iraqis and lay a foundation for peace, freedom, and prosperity in Iraq.

Accomplishments

- Designed an interim structure of government to represent the population in the Baghdad metropolitan area. Neighborhood councils now represent all of Baghdad's 88 neighborhoods to the district and city councils and this activity is being repeated in 15 governorates around the country.
- Established over 200 neighborhood advisory councils, covering more than half the population.
- Assisted civil affairs officers and city councils in Mosul, Al Hillah, Babil, and An Najaf in preparing 2004 budgets.
- 60 ministries, municipalities and government commissions have resumed operations after they received essential supplies and equipment.
- Awarded more than 829 rapid response grants totaling \$40.3 million. These grants serve as a mechanism for increasing Iraqi participation in local governance.

Next Steps

- Assist Baghdad neighborhood councils in providing affordable, accessible, high-quality public services to citizens.
- Support Baghdad officials in determining appropriate charges and subsidies while developing the first locally generated, transparent budget request.
- Develop emergency communications packages for nine key central government ministries to reconnect them to their local ministry offices in the eighteen governorates.
- Rehabilitate municipal buildings in Abbasiya, Al Hira, and Al Haidariya in An Najaf province.

Issues

- Security remains the key issue and constraint in the further development of RTI staff, and ultimately the success of the program.